Dutiful Daughters and the Fathers Who Fail Them:
The application of feminist insights and the retrieval of resistance strands of women’s traditions via a narrative analysis of four unmarried daughter texts in the Hebrew Bible.

Margaret C. Hunt, B.Th., Grad Dip. in Parent Education & Counselling
PhD Thesis
Flinders University Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology
Adelaide, South Australia

30th April, 2010

Word Count: 100,191 words (excluding footnotes)
# Table of Contents

**Explanatory Notes and Abbreviations** ....................................................... 1

**Introduction** ............................................................................................. 3
  Methodological Outline ............................................................................. 4
  Text Selection ......................................................................................... 4
  Reasons for Selecting the Four Texts ..................................................... 7
  Questions to be Addressed ..................................................................... 9

**1. Methodology** ....................................................................................... 13
  Support for a Feminist-Narrative Methodology ................................. 13
  Reasons for Choosing a Feminist-Narrative Approach ....................... 16
  A Summary of the Analytical Approach of the Thesis ....................... 18
  Narrative Analysis .................................................................................. 18
  Definition of Narrative Terms ............................................................... 19
  Powell’s Framework for a Narrative Approach .................................... 27
    *Plot* ....................................................................................................... 27
    *Discourse Analysis* ............................................................................ 33
  Berlin’s Framework for a Narrative Approach ..................................... 42
    *Character Analysis* ........................................................................... 43
  Narrator’s Purpose ............................................................................... 51
  Feminist Re-reading .............................................................................. 52
  Definition of Feminist Terms ................................................................. 41
  Diversity in Feminist Biblical Interpretations ..................................... 56
  Trible, Schüssler Fiorenza and Sakenfeld as Guides ......................... 60
    *Trible’s Interpretative Approach* ....................................................... 61
    *Schüssler-Fiorenza’s Interpretative Approach* ............................... 64
    *Sakenfeld’s Interpretative Approach* ................................................ 67
  Feminist Hermeneutical Values ............................................................ 70
    *The Principle of Suspicion of Patriarchal Biblical Authority* ............ 71
2. The Two Daughters of Lot ......................................................... 91
   Introduction ................................................................................. 91
   Narrative Analysis ...................................................................... 92
   Narrative Context ...................................................................... 92
   Story Outline ............................................................................. 93
   Plot Analysis .............................................................................. 96
      Setting: Spatial, Temporal, Social .......................................... 96
      Events ................................................................................... 98
   Narrative Tension ..................................................................... 101
   Discourse Analysis .................................................................... 104
      Narrative Patterns: Structure, Leitwort, Motif, Theme .......... 104
      Ambiguity ............................................................................. 119
      Irony and Contrast .................................................................. 124
   Character Analysis ...................................................................... 129
      Lot ....................................................................................... 129
      Messengers, YHWH and Abraham ......................................... 135
      Men of Sodom ....................................................................... 139
      Lot’s Sons-in-Law and Lot’s Wife ......................................... 141
      Lot’s Daughters ...................................................................... 143
      Point of View, Names, Hinneh ............................................. 147
   Narrator’s Purpose ..................................................................... 149
   Feminist Re-reading ................................................................... 151
   Suspicion of Biblical Authority .............................................. 152
      Suspicion Applied to Act One .............................................. 152
      Suspicion Applied to Act Two .............................................. 157
      Suspicion Applied to Lot’s Righteousness ............................. 161
   Identification ............................................................................. 165
Conclusions. .............................................................................................................. 346

5. The Daughter of David ......................................................................................... 348

Narrative Analysis ................................................................................................. 351
Narrative Context .................................................................................................. 351
Story Outline ......................................................................................................... 352
Plot Analysis ......................................................................................................... 354
  Setting: Spatial, Temporal, Social ....................................................................... 354
  Events, Narrative Tension and Conflict ................................................................. 356
Discourse Analysis ................................................................................................. 360
  Narrative Patterns: Structure, Motifs .................................................................. 360
  Ambiguity ............................................................................................................. 383
  Irony ..................................................................................................................... 387
Character Analysis ................................................................................................. 388
  Amnon ................................................................................................................ 389
  Jonadab .............................................................................................................. 395
  David ................................................................................................................. 396
  Tamar ................................................................................................................ 400
  Absalom .......................................................................................................... 405
  YHWH .............................................................................................................. 407
  Point of View .................................................................................................... 408
Narrator's Purpose ................................................................................................. 410
Feminist Re-reading ............................................................................................... 412
Suspicion of Biblical Authority ............................................................................. 412
Identification .......................................................................................................... 424
Retrieval of Strands of Resistance Narrative .......................................................... 430
  Habbiryah: Evidence of a Cultic Healing Ritual .................................................. 431
  The Protest Monologues ...................................................................................... 443
Conclusions ............................................................................................................ 447
Conclusion.......................................................................................................................... 451

Biblical Commentary through the Ages................................................................. 452
The Secret World of Women’s Wisdom ............................................................... 453
Dutiful Daughters and the Fathers Who Fail Them ........................................ 456
YHWH’s Role ........................................................................................................ 462
Resisting the Burden of Patriarchy .................................................................. 464
Comparing the Four B’tuloth Texts ...................................................................... 468
Midrashim and the Power of Identification ..................................................... 473
Retrieving Resistance Strands of Women’s Traditions ................................... 474
Original Contributions of this Thesis to the Field of Biblical Studies ......... 476
  Expanding on Signs of Orality ............................................................................ 476
  B’tuloth as Legendary ‘Wise Women’ ............................................................... 477
Summary ................................................................................................................. 478

Postscript ................................................................................................................. 481

 Appendices ............................................................................................................... 482
  Appendix 1: Summary of Methodology ......................................................... 482
  Appendix 2: A Semi-literal Translation of Genesis 19 ................................... 483
  Appendix 3: Bekirah bat Lot: A Midrash ......................................................... 487
  Appendix 4: A Semi-literal Translation of Numbers 27:1-11, Numbers 36 and Joshua 17:3-6 ............................................................... 494
  Appendix 5: Mahlah bat Zelophehad: A Midrash ........................................ 497
  Appendix 6: A Semi-literal Translation of Judges 11:29-40 ......................... 503
  Appendix 7: Seila bat Jephthah: A Midrash .................................................... 505
  Appendix 8: A Semi-literal Translation of 2 Samuel 13:1-22 ....................... 511
  Appendix 9: Tamar bat David: A Midrash ....................................................... 514

Bibliography .............................................................................................................. 522
Abstract

Through the application of a feminist narrative methodology, this dissertation examines narratives about unmarried daughters and their fathers in the Hebrew Bible. A primary aim is to gain feminist insight into the texts and thereby retrieve strands of resistance narrative which may be present in one or more of the stories. In the process, commonalities between the texts, particularly in regard to the protagonists, have been noted. Four pericopes have been chosen to study daughters who are of marriageable age and are the responsibility of their fathers because they have not yet been given in marriage.

The nine daughters – the two daughters of Lot (Genesis 19), Mahlah, Hoglah, Milcah, Noah and Tirzah, the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27 and 36 and Joshua 17), the daughter of Jephthah ( Judges 11) and Tamar, the daughter of David (2 Samuel 13) - share the narrators’ androcentric interest in the preservation of family lines of descent. The first two stories record the success of this endeavour due to the efforts of the daughters, while the second two document the failure of the daughters to halt family disintegration brought about by their fathers’ negligence.

Although suppositions and opinions about the origins of narrative strands in ancient texts are necessarily presented with caution, this dissertation’s narrative and feminist analysis has led me to construe that valuable traces of women’s
traditions - which the narrators presumably retained for theological, political or other reasons - are nevertheless discernible in the texts. In Genesis 19, for example, Lot’s daughter’s speech reveals a salvific proposal; Judges 11 retains references to three women’s rituals; the description of Tamar’s food preparation in 2 Samuel 13 almost certainly has cultic significance; and the chutzpah of Zelophehad’s daughters in Numbers 27 and Joshua 17 is one of the Hebrew Bible’s best kept secrets.

My analysis and feminist re-readings of the chosen stories identify a rarely acknowledged world of women’s wisdom in what could be remnants of traditional material which have been preserved and handed down by the women of early Israel.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Name: Margaret Carlyn Hunt

Signature:

Date: 27 April 2010
Acknowledgements

The process of producing this dissertation has been long and at times, floundering at first and apparently endless, and I owe my deepest gratitude to the people who have so graciously endured the marathon and for giving me the encouragement to keep going. My supervisors, Professor Norman Habel and Rev. Dr. Anna Grant-Henderson, deserve every accolade for patiently bearing with me through the years as they taught me about writing a thesis almost from scratch. I thank and honour them for their unflagging encouragement, corrections and guidance, and especially for their insights and enthusiasm at every stage of the journey with “my girls.”

Thank you to all the librarians at Adelaide College of Divinity and the staff of the Löhe Memorial Library at Adelaide Lutheran College, as well as thanks to Rosalie Upton who edited a few of the chapters and even said that she enjoyed reading them. I also wish to acknowledge and thank three women for their letters and emails: Dr. Ora Lipschitz for those comprehensive lists of references, Rev. Dr. Patricia Kopstein for her insights regarding the Hebrew Bible, and Dr. Elaine Wainwright for her encouragement and advice about healing practices in the Ancient Near East. I also wish to express deep gratitude to Dr. Joh Wurst and Rev. Dr. Peter Lockwood for their encouragement and invaluable advice -along with their very helpful written comments on sections of the manuscript. Thanks too, to Rev. Dr. Maurice Schild and Ulrich Stauss for checking for errors in the German translations.

For sharing the joys and pain of thesis writing with me, thanks and blessings to my PhD student colleagues and especially a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Annelie Brixius who not only always showed a great interest in my work, but also has spent many voluntary hours helping me to iron out problems great and small.
To my friend Belle Cheney who never ceases to amaze me with her gracious and cheerful acceptance of all the lost hours we could have had together, as well as her unstinting encouragement. Thanks to Helen Lockwood, my friend, cousin and work colleague who not only supported me in this venture, but also showed great restraint in accepting that in the last two years I was unable to take on work assignments and challenges she had envisaged for me at Lutheran Community Care. My current work colleagues - Helene, Lisa, Helen and Steve - have always shown interest and given me their support and for this I am grateful. My extended family has also given me space and acceptance which has meant so much; I thank and honour them all. Thank you, Matthew, for being interested enough to read some of the drafts.

To my dear children - Alison, Emily, Rosie and Tom – you are all wonderful young people who have got on with your lives and accepted the responsibilities of planning weddings yourselves because of what has almost become a never-ending story. You all have been gracious and without complaint despite the many times I have neglected your interests in order to doggedly complete this work. Most importantly, thank you to my beloved John. You were the first to teach me about literature and feminism, and you have unflaggingly kept faith in me and loved me, not only through the times I was ready to give up, but also through the many more times I have poured out my fears and inadequacies to you. Without you I would not have managed this. Thank you John.

My final acknowledgement goes to the nine unmarried daughters whose brief appearances in the pages of the Hebrew Bible have given me so many insights into the ancient world and whose lives continue to teach me about those who are little, least and last in my own world. They have now been around for over seven years and are almost part of my family. I honour them and give thanks for their gifts, and I pray that many more people will come to know their stories and grow spiritually in the process.